DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 553 SP 032 967

AUTHOR Slater, Robert O.; Tashakkori, Abbas
TITLE The American School Teacher: Agent of Change or Keeper of Tradition?
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; *Conservatism; Educational Change; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *Liberalism; Secondary School Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; *Traditionalism; Values

ABSTRACT

Observers of school reform typically point to teachers in explaining the slowness of educational reform. Results of a study of conservatism among teachers are presented in this document. A sample of 191 male and 617 female elementary and secondary school teachers was taken from the General Social Survey project, which has been conducted annually between 1972 and 1989. All of the yearly samples were combined and teachers were compared with the rest of the respondents. An analysis of the data suggests that teachers are not more conservative but are, in fact, slightly more liberal than the general population. They are, however, more conservative than those of comparable education. Thus, teachers exhibit both conservative and progressive elements, a duality that makes sense in terms of their role in society. Education is both a conservative and progressive force in society and teachers reflect this dual character. The data are displayed in eight tables. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED329553

THE AMERICAN SCHOOL TEACHER:

AGENT OF CHANGE OR KEEPER OF TRADITION?

Robert O. Slater
Educational Administration

AND

Abbas Tashakkori
Educational Research Methodology

Department of Administrative and Foundational Services
College of Education
111 Peabody Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. O. Slater

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 032 967

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

Are teachers conservative? Eight years into the school reform movement, scholars and policymakers have begun to assess the progress of school reform and to wonder about its prospects. Searching for new conceptual tools with which to understand how far school reform has brought us this time, they have drawn upon the language of philosophy and linguistics. Reforms are discussed in terms of "first-order" and "second-order" changes, and are viewed as having to do with either "surface" or "deep" structure.

Implicit and explict in these and similar efforts to conceptualize school reform is the idea that education has a marked tendency to resist change. It favors first-order over second-order changes and reforms that affect the deep structure of schooling.

When it comes to fixing the source of this tendency to resist change, observers of the school reform scene, while perhaps not in complete agreement, typically point to teachers. The failure of reform, they say, has much to do with teachers' resistance to change, i.e., with teacher conservatism.

But are teachers as conservative as school reformers suppose them to be?

This is a study of conservatism among teachers. Are teachers more conservative than the general population? Are they more conservative than others of comparable education?

The data suggest that teachers are not more conservative but are in fact slightly more liberal than the general population. They are, however, more conservative than those of comparable education. Thus, teachers exhibit both conservative and progressive elements, and this duality makes sense in terms of their role in society. Education is both a conservative and progressive force in society and teachers reflect this dual character.

The Practical and Theoretical Relevance of Teacher Conservatism

The question of teacher conservatism is important for both practical and theoretical reasons. On a purely practical level, teacher conservatism holds implications for school reform. One of the most striking features of past school reform movements is that the least successful reforms have been those having to do with pedagogy, i.e., those which have addressed teacher practices within and between classrooms (Kirst and Meister, 1985:180). For the reform minded, this is a dismal finding given that "...the most common goal of school reform over the past...[has been] changing teacher behavior" (Cuban, 1988:34). But are teachers as conservative and resistant to change as these historical studies and anecdotal evidence suggest?

On the more theoretical side, Political scientists have been interested in teacher conservatism because of their concern with political socialization (Hess & Torney, 1967; Zeigler, 1967; Rosenberg, 1985). Teachers are primarily responsible for the transmission of culture from one generation to the next, and are therefore among a society's most important agents of socialization. If a society's teachers are conservative, then its children are likely to be systematically, albeit unconsciously, exposed to conservative ways of thinking. Such exposure, however, risks making

education into propaganda, and the inculcation of a conservative ideology runs counter to the spirit of a pluralistic, liberal democracy, where rationality and openness to differences of opinion, are dominant norms.

Sociologists also find the question of teacher conservatism interesting because it bears, at its most general level, on the relationship between social structure and individuality (Durkheim, 1964), a relationship that, in more concrete terms, concerns the link between work and self (Hughes, 1971) or occupation and ethos (Lortie, 1976). From this perspective, the interest has less to do with whether teachers are conservative and more with the question of whether teaching is itself inherently conservative.

For both practical and theoretical reasons, then, the question of teacher conservatism is important and deserves further attention. Two issues in particular need addressing.

Is Teaching Conservative?

The first issue is related to the general point that the question of whether teaching is an inherently conservative activity or occupation is more fundamental than whether teachers themselves are conservative. If conservatism is an attitude or orientation of individuals only, an occupation, such as teaching, is likely to change its ideological complexion over time, as its old members retire and its new ones, with different ideologies, enter. So, while one

generation of teachers may be conservative, the next may be liberal. But if teaching itself is an inherently conservative activity or occupation which tends to attract conservative types or promote conservatism among its practitioners, then teachers in every generation will tend to be conservative.

But to know whether teaching is conservative, one must compare teachers with incumbents in other occupations, for, to observe that conservatives outnumber liberals among teachers is to say nothing about whether teaching is itself conservative. It may well be that conservatives outnumber liberals among non-teachers as well. If so, teaching stands to be no more conservative than any other occupation. Thus, the question of whether teaching is conservative can only be answered by comparing teaching with other occupations. To date, this has not been done.

The Meaning of "Conservatism"

A second issue, not yet systematically addressed in the literature on teacher conservatism, has to do with meaning, particularly the meaning of "conservatism." Scholars interested in teacher conservatism typically use the term in both its general and political senses. Thus, teachers are often said to be "conservative" in the sense that they tend to resist change or support the status quo. The term "conservative" is also used, however, to describe their

political orientations. In this sense, teachers are said to be conservative in their voting behavior.

To avoid confusing the two senses of conservatism, in this paper we will adopt a distinction often found in the sociological literature: the distinction between "traditionalism" and "conservatism." Mannheim makes the distinction as follows:

> Traditionalist action is almost purely reactive behavior. Conservative action is action oriented to meanings" (1986:76, emphasis in original).

Conservatism has, as Robert Nisbet puts it, a "solid and well known reference to politics and political power..." (1986:vii).

While it is not likely that every conservative will agree on The various meanings or meaning-complex to which conservative action is oriented, there are some elements which, since Edmund Burke at least, have been more or less associated with the conservative world view. One relatively recent and articulate re-statement of these elements of conservative thought can be found in William Harbour's (1982) The Foundations of Conservative Thought. Roughly put, the essential ingredients are:

1) A theocentric world view.

   Conservatives tend to believe in a hierarchical order with God at the apex; they believe that God not man is the measure of all things.

2) Man the imperfect being.

Conservatives usually believe that man is an imperfect being incapable of perfection; man's nature is tragically flawed.

3) Spiritual development and virtue important.

Conservatives hold that man is a moral being who requires the cultivation of virtue.

4) Limitations of politics.

Just as man is tragically flawed and limited, so are his politics; social improvement is at best incremental. Inequality is within the nature of things and cannot be erased through government programs.

5) Religion essential for good society.

Man is a spiritual being and must adopt some kind of religious orientation for his life to have order.

6) Social Stability rests on custom and traditional roles.

The key to social stability rests on customs and proven ways of doing things. Change for change sake is to be avoided.

7) Elites make the best rulers.

From the conservative point of view, only society's best educated and wealthiest make the best rulers.

8) Decentralization of political institutions.

Conservatives favor localism, small-scale relationships, and community.

These eight elements are probably not the only ingredients of the conservative outlook nor is it likely that all conservatives would agree that this list is either wholly accurate or definitive. Nonetheless, for purposes of this

paper we assume that this or something like this constellation of beliefs underlay conservatism, and we will use this general definition of conservatism as a guide for operationalization. This is not to say that we will try to operationalize each of these elements. We will rather use them as a general guide for selecting multiple indicators.

METHOD

RESPONDENTS:

The General Social Survey project (Davis and Smith, 1989), a public-domain data set, provided the data of the present study. Each year between 1972 and 1989 (excluding 1979 and 1981) an independent sample of approximately 1500 individuals was selected from the adult (age 18 and over) English speaking population across the United States, and interviewed for about one and a half hours. Although there was variation in the type of sampling (see Davis and Smith, 1989), for most practical reasons, all samples can be considered to be representative of the adult population of the U.S. In addition to socio-demographic information, attitudes and beliefs about a large array of issues were measured. For the purposes of the present study, all of these yearly samples (n=24,893) were combined and teachers were compared with the rest of the respondents. Such pooled-time-series analysis merges the time samples and, hence, comparing teachers and non-teachers provides an 'average' inference regarding

differences during the 17 years. Obviously, the findings are not generalizable to any of the time periods during which the samples have been selected, including the present. Rather, they provide an overall picture of the differences and/or similarities between teachers and others during the less than 2 decades. Overall, there were 191 male and 617 female elementary and secondary school teachers in the pooled sample. The comparison group of non-teachers consisted of 10,776 males and 13,309 females, respectively. The average age of teachers and non-teachers were 46.83 and 44.94, respectively. The male teachers had the smallest average age (40.67), and the female teachers had the largest mean age (48.73), as compared to the male (44.21) and female (45.53) non-teachers. As expected, teachers were more educated (mean=17.28) than non-teachers (mean=12.15). Male teachers had the highest mean number of years of schooling (17.28), followed by female teachers (16.21), other males (12.15), and other females (11.69).

VARIABLES AND THEIR MEASUREMENT:

As was mentioned before, conservatism is marked by a constellation of attitudes/beliefs. Belies about women and their roles/rights, abortion, racial issues, and overall political outlook are among these. The GSS provides an array of items measuring these, and other related constructs. Seven

groups of items were selected for comparing teachers and non-teachers. Each group consisted of items pertaining to one theoretically important attitude object. In the GSS, The instrument was rotated across years, such that some items were not presented to all respondents. For each of the 7 categories of interest here, only those items presented in all, or almost all, rounds of data collection were selected to maximize the size of teacher subsample. The categories, and wording of the items are as follows:

Religious Beliefs:

Religion is important in the conservative world-view. Four items pertained to religious beliefs and/or practices. One asked, "The United States Supreme court has ruled that no state or local government may require the reading of the Lord's Prayer of Bible verse in public schools. What are your views on this --do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?" They were also asked about their frequency of prayer, and participation in religious services. Also, the degree of fundamentalism or liberalism of respondents' reported present religious affiliation was determined and provided in the data set.

Custom and traditional beliefs:

The conservative mind favors established customs and tradition over change. Conservatives are disposed toward traditional sexual and race relationships and behavior. For

example, they tend to have traditional views of women and women's roles, of sex and sexual matters, of the family, child bearing and rearing, and so on.

Women and Women's Rights: A total of 9 items were directly related to women's issues, their abilities, having a career, and the like. These were as follows: a) "Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women", b) "If your party nominated a woman for President, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?" c) "Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men", d) "Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her? e) "Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this amendment (ERA)?", f) "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family", g) "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works", h) "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work", and i) "It is important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself.

Beliefs about sex and related issues: Among a society's mores and customs, those having to do with sex and sexually related issues are often powerful. Conservatives tend to

prefer traditional approaches to sexual matters. Four items in the data set were related to sexual issues (other items were not included in all rounds of data collection and, hence, the sample size for them was small for our comparisons). "Would you be for or against sex education in public schools?" "There's been a lot of discussion about the way morals and attitudes about sex are changing in this country. If a man and a woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?", "what is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner --It is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?", "What about homosexual relations between two adults of the same sex --do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all." Responses to the first two options (always or almost always wrong) were pooled, and considered as 'opposing' the issues.

Abortion and its legalization: Seven different scenarios invoving abortion were presented to respondents, and they were asked about their agreement or disagreement with legal abortion rights of women as follows: "Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion": a) "If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby ?", b) "If she is married and does

not want any more children?", c) "If the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?", d) "If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children ?", e) "If she becomes pregnant as a result of rape?", f) "If she is not married and does not want to marry the man?", g) "If the woman wants it for any reason?", and h) "If the woman's own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy?"

Unconventional or non-normative behavior: A number of hypothetical scenarios, each involving an individual who was associated with a controversial issue in the culture, were presented to respondents. These involved a communist, a homosexual, a militarist, a racist, or an anti-religious. These individuals were portrayed in the following general forms: "There are always some people whose ideas are considered bad or dangerous by other people. For instance, Somebody who is against all churches and religion"; "Consider a person who believes that blacks are genetically inferior"; "... a man who admits he is a communist", " ... a person who advocates doing away with elections and letting the military run the country," or "... a man who admits he is a homosexual". Respondents were asked if they believed each of these should be prevented from speaking in their community ("Suppose this admitted communist wanted to make a speech in your community. Should he be allowed to speak, or not?"), be allowed to teach ("Suppose he is teaching in a college.

Should he be fired, or not?"), or his/her book should be removed from the library ("Suppose he wrote a book which is in your public library. Somebody in your community suggests that the book should be removed from the library. Would you favor removing it, or not?". Obviously, regardless of individual's characteristics, lack of tolerance, and belief in suppressive reactions to any of these nonconformists would be a sign of conservatism.

Race Relations: Ten items were used as indicators of teachers and non-teachers' attitudes/beliefs regarding racial issues. Wording of these items were as follows: "Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks) and whites?", "How strongly would you object if a member of your family wanted to bring a (Negro/Black) friend home to dinner? Would you object strongly, mildly, or not at all?" "Do you favor or oppose bussing of (Negro/Black) and white school children from one school district to another?" "White people have a right to keep (Negroes/Blacks) out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and (Negroes/blacks) should respect that right", and "Blacks/Negroes shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted." Also, they were presented with a scenario as follows: "Suppose there is a community-wide vote on the general housing issue. There are two possible laws to vote on ... Which law would you vote for?" The two options were a)

One law says that a homeowner can decide for himself whom to sell his house to, even if he prefers not to sell to Negroes/Blacks", or b) "The second law says that a homeowner cannot refuse to sell to someone because of their race or color".

Limits of politics:

Beliefs about Government's spending on defense and environment were two other measures of conservatism/liberalism ("we are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether we are spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount"). Among the issues presented (e.g. solving the problems of big cities, halting the rising crime rate, dealing with drug addiction, etc.), two ("improving and protecting the environment", and "the military, armaments, and defense") seemed to be rather less ambiguous indicators of conservatism/ liberalism. It was assumed that conservative pattern of response would be associated with belief that we are spending enough or too little on Arms, and enough or too much to protect the environment.

DATA ANALYSIS:

For the main purpose of the study, i.e. to compare teachers with the 'general population,' the sample was devided

into two groups (teachers, others), and percentages agreeing or diagreeing with the issues were otained and presented in Tables. For each group of items pertaining to each of the categories stated above, an overall index was also calculated and compared between teachers and others. Due to differences in measurement scale, it became neccessary to re-scale some items such that their maximum and minimum were the same as other scales (e.g., a 3-point response scale was recoded as 1, 1.5, and 2, such that its maximum and minimum were the same as another item which was measured on a 2-point scale). Scores on the items in each category were, then, added to obtain a single index. If one considers each item in a category a belief statement (or representing a belief statement) regarding the underlying issue in that category (e.g. abortion, or race), then each composite index can be considered an overall attitude regarding that specific issue (see Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980 for details regarding the relationship between beliefs and overall attitudes).

In addition to presenting the percentage agree or disagreement with each of the 52 statements within the teacher by gender groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed on each of the 7 composite indiecs. Each of these analyses, consisted of two factors (Teacher/other and Sex). Due to unequal cell size, a regression approach (see SPSS-X, 1980) was employed in calculation of sums of squares.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Table 1 presents the responses to a number of items tapping religious tendencies. As that table indicates, teachers, in general, were less likely to have a fundamentalist religious orientation than non-teachers. However, they reported greater frequency of praying, and attending religious services, than non-teachers as well. Probably as a result of their greater religiosity, when they were asked about their beliefs regarding Bible prayer in schools, a larger percentage of teachers than non-teachers favored it. In general, however, teachers seem to be more religious than the population as a whole. As mentioned in the Method section, for each category of items a composite index was calculated by adding the re-scaled values of items in that category. The means for the religiousity composite index are also reported in Table 1. A 2x2 (Teacher/other and Sex) Analysis of Variance indicated non-significant main effect of teacher/other factor (see Table 1).

**** TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ***

B. ORIENTATION TO CUSTOM AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS:

Women's Issues: One of the important debates between conservative and liberal points of view relates to women's rights, abilities, and their 'proper' roles and responsibilities both in and outside the family. Not only in

the U. S., but also in other cultures (e.g. see Tashakkori and Thompson, 1988), belief in a pre-destined or even a divine set of roles for women, and in their inferiority as compared to men, has been identified with conservatism. Table 2 presents the teachers' and non-teachers' responses to a number of issues in this relation.

****** TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE ******

As can be seen in Table 2, both the male and female teachers tended more to disapprove of limiting women to their traditional family roles. For example, fewer teachers believed that women should take care of the home, and leave taking care of the country to men. Fewer teachers believed that a married women should not earn money if her husband can support her. Also, fewer teachers than non-teachers agreed that mother-child bond was adversely affected by the mother's working outside of the house. Although some of these differences were not significant when considered separately, the ANOVA on the composite attitude indicated a significant main effect of the Teacher/other factor (see Table 2)[1].

Sex and Sexual Matters: Strict adherence to normative sexual behaviors, and lack of tolerance for sexual conducts that are not considered 'proper' should be another distinctive

[1] In passing, it is interesting to note the strength of the belief (by more than 62% of male and almost 40% of female respondents) that preschool children are hurt if their mother works outside home.

aspect of conservatism. Four items in the data set dealt with these issues. Table 3 presents the responses to these items. Overall, although teachers were slightly less opposed to sex education at schools and disapproved homosexuality less frequently than non-teachers, differences were significant only between female teachers and non-teachers. Attitudes about premarital and extramarital sex was not considerably different between the two groups of either gender. Female teachers were slightly (by about 2% difference) more conservative than the rest of the population. Once again, ANOVA inciated a main effect of Teacher/other factor on the composite attitude pertaining to sexual conduct (see Table 3).

**** TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE ****

Abortion and its legalization: Abortion has been a potent social-political issue in this country during the last two decades. Liberal factions in politics, women's rights groups, and pro-choice organizations have pushed for legalization of abortion, and government support of medical and other institutions that provide abortion related services and counselling. On the other hand, the more conservative population has tried to either prevent or modify such services. Table 4 presents percent respondents' disagreement with legal abortion under different circumstances.

****** TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE*****

Generally speaking, as Table 4 shows, the female teachers disagreed less frequently with legal abortion than non-teachers in most of the hypothetical situations. Overall, although the same trend was present among males, the difference between teachers and non-teachers were relatively small. There was agreement between teachers and non-teachers on those conditions that were clear and relatively non-ambiguous. For example, both groups opposed legal abortion for "any reason" without any qualifiers, and favored legal abortion if there was a strong chance of birth defect. On the other hand, teachers showed less conservatism under vague or more controversial cases such as abortion as a means of birth control, especially for unmarried women. Once again, the main effect of Teacher/other factor on the composite index was signifcant (see Table 4).

Unconventional-non-normative modes of behavior: Certain groups of individuals have been traditionally disliked and/or considered extreme in the American culture. Anti-religious, Communist, and homosexuals are among these. Although one might consider an individual's dislike of and/or disagreement with a person who is portrayed as a racist or a militarist an indication of his/her liberal or non-traditional attitude, adherence to harsh modes of reaction to these groups, and belief in the necessity of censorship of such individuals/groups should be considered an indication of

conservatism rather than liberalism. Table 5 summarizes the teachers' and non-teachers' responses to hypothetical situations regarding these. As can be seen in that Table, on all items in this relation, the teachers showed significantly less conservatism than non-teachers. On most issues, the male teachers appeared to be the least conservative, followed by the female teachers, male-non-teachers, and other female non-teachers. The main effect of Teacher/other on the composite score, and the interaction of that factor with Sex were signficant (see Table 5).

****** TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE *****

Race relations: Although there are exceptions in the history of the American culture, perceived distance between self and people from other racial groups has been greater among traditional/conservative sectors. Resistance to inter-racial marriage and neighborhood, school desegregation, and avoidance of close social ties with people of the other racial groups are examples of such social distance. Table 6 presents responses to items that were direct or indirect indicators of such distance. Except in relation to bussing children to desegregated schools, in all other issues the teachers were less conservative, or showed less distance than the non-teachers. Due to the complexity of the issue, opposition to racial bussing, however, might not be an indication of conservatism alone (or at all). As a matter of fact, despite

disagreement with bussing, both teachers and non-teachers expressed strong agreement with school desegregation. Such agreement was more frequent in teachers than non-teachers. ANOVA indicated the significance of the Teacher/other main effect, and the interaction of that factor with Sex (see Table 6).

**** TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE ****

As mentioned before, lack of close interpersonal encounters with individuals from specific social groups is an important behavioral indices of social distance. Among these, objection to having a person of a different race over for dinner is a measure of such distance. Relatively speaking, greater percentage of teachers than non-teachers favored having a person of different race home for dinner. If one considers tendencies for social distance a variable to closely covary with conservatism, then these data, and other responses summarized in Table 6, would point to teacher's greater liberal attitude/behaviors.

C. The limits of politics:

While conservatives favor local control over central control and big government, they have traditionally supported defense spending. A part of this personality profile is the belief in the necessity of firearms to protect oneself, and the citizen's rights to do so without interference from others, including the government. Table 7 presents the

responses to a number of items tapping these types of tendencies. As that table indicates, teachers were more inclined to express dissatisfaction regarding the government's expenditure on defense, and not enough expenditure on environment, than non-teachers. Male teachers were less opposed to gun-control legislation than male non-teachers, the trend was weaker among females. Female teachers favored capital punishment less than female non-teachers, while males were not different from each other. As also indicated in Table 7, the Teacher/other main effect, and the interaction of that factor with Sex were significant

**** TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE ***

SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

A number of methodological issues must be taken into consideration in a study of this sort. First, the pooled-time-series analysis employed in the present study collapses all time samples. Although as far as the main purpose of this study is concerned, such collapsing provides an 'overall' picture of the differences between teachers and others during the last two decades, the picture might not be the same in the present time. Small sample does not allow comparison within any of the time samples. However, analysis of data pertaining to 1981-1989 time period (75 male and 304 female teachers compared to 5377 male and 7017 female non-teachers) revealed a

trend very closely comparable to the overall (1972-1989) sample.

A second methodological consideration is related to the age and racial structure of the two groups. The comparison group consisted of individuals who were at least 18 years old, while the youngest teacher was 22 years old. Only 2.5% (20 teachers) were less than 25 years old, as compared to 8.5% (2040) of non-teachers. Also, 10.3% (83) of the teachers were non-White, as compared to 16.8% (3799) non-teachers. To deal with some of these differences, analyses were performed within White subsample of individuals who were at least 25 years old. The results were, generally, close to the overall sample of teachers and non-teachers. Within the non-White subsample, too, the same trend was present. In other words, differences in race or age does not seem to pose a threat to the validity of comparisons between the teachers and others.

Another methodological issue is related to differences between teachers and others in their level of education. As mentioned before, the main purpose of the study was to compare the teachers with the 'general population,' from which their students come. Differences in education (or age, or other socio-demographic attributes) should not be considered problematic, as far as this purpose is in mind. As far as the REASONS for teachers' smaller degree of conservatism is of conceren, one reason might be that their smaller conservatism

is due to their higher education, as compared to the "general public". This leads to a new question to be answered. Are teachers also less conservative than other sectors of the population with the same level of education as themselves? To answer this question, the 7 composite scores calculated for each set of indices (Tables 1-7) were used to test differences between teachers and others within two educational levels (college, graduate). A set of 2x2x2 (teacher/other, Bachlors/graduate education, male/female) Analysis of Variance was performed on each composite index. As before, due to non-equality of cell frequencies, a regression approach (see SPSS-X, 1980, ANOVA procedure) was used to calculate the sums of squares.

Table 8 presents the means within each of the groups. ANOVA results indicated significant main effect of teacher/other factor for 5 of the 7 indices (beliefs about women's issues, and the political beliefs presented in Table 7 were the two expeption). In the case of attitudes towards women's issues, and belifs about specific political issues presented in Table 7, the double interaction of teacher/other and sex was significant ($F(1,2441)=16.45$, $p<.02$; and $F(1,3813)=8.10$, $p<.004$, respectively). The same double interaction was also present in relation to beliefs about racial issues ($F(1,3809)=6.21$, $p<01$). No other double, or triple interaction was significant in any of the ANOVA

analyses. It is interesting to note that main effect of educational level was significant for all 7 indices. However, interaction of education and other factors were not significant. These results strongly indicate that although education did make a difference (the higher degree group was more liberal, as expected), but the teachers were still significantly different from non-teachers regardless of education.

**** TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE ****

Direction of these differences can be observed in Table 8. As that Table indicates, teachers were generally less liberal than non-teachers with the same educational background. There were a few exception to this. The most noticable exceptions were the beliefs about women, and the specific political attitudes (Table 7), the issues for which the interaction of sex and teacher/other factor were also significant. On these two issues, the male teachers were slightly more liberal than non-teachers. The other noticable exception was present in relation to female teachers' religiousity. Those with a bachlors degree had a smaller score on this index than non-teachers. Due to lack of significant interaction of sex and teacher factor, this last result should be interpreted causiously.

CONCLUSIONS

We started this paper with a general question regarding the American teacher: Are teachers more conservative than the general population from which their students come? The data indicate that they are not. In fact, if anything, they are slightly more liberal than the general population. How do we reconcile these findings with the widespread belief that teachers are conservative and traditional?

Education has long been thought to have both progressive and conservative tendencies. On the one hand, years of schooling tend to be positively associated with liberalism; the higher one's education, the greater one's tendency to be liberal. The significant differences due to educatioanal level in the present data confirms this as well. Even in traditional cultures or subcultures, education has been shown to lead to modernity (and liberalism) of attitudes even when modern/liberal values and beliefs are systematically removed from its content (Tashakkori and Thompson, 1988). On the other hand, education is a systematic effort to socialize children towards values, norms and knowledge of a culture. Hence, the primary function of education within society as a whole appears to be conservative; it is the chief means by which a culture is preserved (and conserved) from one generation to the next.

Supposing the above to be case, we would find that teachers simply reflect in their attitudes and orientation the dual and contradictory tendencies of education in general: they have at once tendencies to be liberal and conservative. Their relatively high level of education makes them liberal, at least more liberal than the general background population from which their students emerge. They are, however, not as liberal as others from this general population who have the same level of education. There are a number of possible explanations for these differences. One possiblity is that their occupation pressures them to be conservative lest they violate local and community norms and culture. Hence, the difference could be either due to selective drop-out of highly liberal individuals from the profession, or socialization towards more moderate attitudinal and political positions over time. Another explanation is that the teaching profession attracts those who are relatively less liberal in political and other beliefs than others with the same educational level. The third possiblity is that their education makes them more conservative in attitudes and beliefs than others with the same level of education. Without a longitudinal data set it is not possible to rule-out any of these.

As far as the main purpose of this study is concerned, regardless of the exact reason, teachers seem to be operationg in the middle of two potentially extreme socio-political

belief systems pushing them towards liberalism or conservatism of attitudes. It might be safe to conclude that the result of these forces is that they serve to smooth or moderate social change processes. They are both agents of change AND keepers of tradition. Teachers differ from the general public, and as such, they have the potential to introduce attitudinal standpoints that are more liberal than the families their students come from. On the other hand, their difference with that general public is not large enough to lead to their 'alienation' from the norms and ideals. Hence, they are promoters of norms and beliefs of the general population as well. This duality of function is what makes teachers such vital parts of the socialization process.

The results could be suggesting that the American teacher is more liberal than the general population because of his/her higher level of education, and at the same time, 'conservative enough' to, along with the family and other social institutions, be able to promote the smooth continuity of culture. The fact that the American teacher is, on the average, just slightly less conservative than the general public might point to the adaptive power of the teaching profession in dealing with the dual demand which is expected of it.

REFERENCES

Davis, J. A., and Smith, T. W. (1989). General Social Survey, 1972-1989. Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center.

Harbour, W. (1982). The Foundations of Conservative Thought. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Hess, R. and Torney, J. (1967). The Development of Political Attitudes in Children. Chicago, Aldine.

Kirst, Michael W. and Meister, Gail. (1985) "Turbulence in American Sceondary Schools: What Reforms Last?" Curriculum Inquiry 15:169-186.

Lortie, D. (1975). Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mannheim, K. (1986). Conservatism. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Rosenberg, S. (1985). Sociology, psychology, and the study of political behavior: The case of the research on political socialization. Journal of Politics 47:715-731.

Tashakkori, A. and Thompson, V. D. (1988). Cultural change and attitude change: An assessment of post-revolutionary marriage and family attitudes in Iran. Population Research and Policy Review 7:3-27.

Zeigler, H. (1967). The Political Life of American Teachers. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Table 1 Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with specific religious positions

Issue:	Male			Female		
Percent respondents:	T	O	X^2	T	O	X^2
Favor Bible prayer in schools	51	41	3.8	49	35	21.3*
Own religion 'Fundamentalist'	21	30	7.9+	24	34	26.9*
Pray more than once a week	64	57	1.0	86	80	4.0
Attend religious service >=2x a month	53	40	10.7*	64	52	29.3*
Overall index (mean)	6.00		5.88	6.27		6.20

* p<.001
+ p<.01
Note: Main effect of Teacher/other was marginally significant [F(1, 24791= 3.48, p<.06], main effect of Sex was significant [F(1, 24791)=34.05, p<.001]. The interaction of the two factors was not significant.

Table 2 Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with specific options in relation to women's capabilities, rights, roles, and labor market participation

Issue: Percent agreement with:	Male T	Male O	Male X^2	Female T	Female O	Female X^2
Women are not suited for politics	29	41	6.3+	36	41	2.7
Will not vote for a woman president	9	17	5.2	17	18	0.2
Women should take care of home not country	12	29	17.1*	18	30	23.5*
Women should not earn money if supported	16	27	8.4+	15	26	24.1*
Better if men work & women stay home	47	53	0.7	41	50	3.2
Working mother insecure bond with children	63	62	0.0	42	39	3.4
Working mother harms children	41	48	1.0	30	35	2.1
Wife should first help husband	21	39	5.8+	31	41	4.9
Overall index (mean)	9.70	10.65		9.91	10.54	

* $p<.001$
+ $p<.01$
Note: The main effect of Teacher/other factor was significant [$F(1,16087)=244.98$, $p<.001$]. Main effect of Sex, and its interaction with the Teacher factor were not significant.

Table 3 Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with different sex-related issues

Percent respondents who:	Male T	Male O	Male X^2	Female T	Female O	Female X^2
Disapprove extramarital sex	84	84	0.0	91	89	1.3
Oppose sex education at schools	9	17	4.5	13	17	4.0
Disapprove homosexual relations	74	79	1.4	72	79	10.5*
Disapprove premarital sex	33	34	0.1	48	46	0.8
Overall index (mean)	6.03	6.22		6.37	6.44	

* $p<.001$

Note: Main effect of the Teacher/other and Sex factors were significant [$F(1, 24663)=4.54$, and 19.89, $p<.03$ and $p<.001$, respectively]. The interaction between the two was not significant ($F=0.97$).

Table 4. Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who opposed specific options in relation to legal support of abortion in specific cases

Percent disagreement with legal abortion:	Male			Female		
	T	O	X^2	T	O	X^2
Legal abortion for any reason	62	61	0.0	56	64	8.8+
Married want no more children	48	54	2.5	51	59	12.3*
Poor, can not afford another child	45	49	1.3	45	53	13.5*
Pregnant due to rape	16	17	0.0	13	18	8.8+
Unmarried pregnant	48	53	1.8	48	57	15.8*
Strong chance of birth defect	16	18	0.4	17	19	1.2
Threat to the mother's health	8	9	0.3	9	11	1.4
Overall index (mean)	9.30	9.52		9.30	9.72	

* p<.001
+ p<.01
Note: Main effect of the Teacher/other factor was significant [F(1,22218)=51.25, p<.002). Main effect of Sex, or its interaction with Sex were not significant.

Table 5. Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with specific options in relation to civil rights

Issue: Percent agreement with:	Male T	Male O	Male X^2	Female T	Female O	Female X^2
Not allow anti-religious speak	15	30	13.1*	26	37	25.3*
Not allow anti-religious teach	32	52	20.7*	44	59	33.7*
Remove anti-religious book	17	35	17.6*	24	40	43.8*
Not allow racist to speak	17	35	12.2*	35	44	10.1*
Not allow racist to teach	35	53	11.9*	51	60	11.3*
Remove racist's book	16	34	12.2*	24	40	34.3*
Not allow communist to speak	19	38	20.2*	31	45	36.3*
Fire communist teacher	29	53	27.9*	47	58	19.0*
Remove communist books	18	38	22.3*	26	44	52.0*
Not allow militarist to speak	23	44	16.5*	32	45	19.9*
Not allow militarist to teach	36	59	18.7*	51	62	14.5*
Remove militarist book	21	41	14.4*	30	43	21.7*
Not allow homosexual to speak	11	32	23.9*	21	33	24.3*
Not allow homosexual to teach	23	44	20.2*	31	44	26.7*
Remove homosexual's book	22	41	18.3*	30	43	26.5*
Overall index (mean)	18.32	21.32		20.06	22.01	

* $p<.001$

Note: Main effect of the Teacher/other and Sex factors were significant [$F(1, 17735)=94.46$, and 22.81, respectively, $p<.001$ for both]. The interaction between the two was also significant ($F=4.19$, $p<.04$).

Table 6 Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with specific racial positions

Issue: Percent response:	Male T	Male O	Male X^2	Female T	Female O	Female X^2
Legally ban racial intermarriage	7	28	31.6*	18	31	34.2*
Had other race home for dinner	35	27	2.8	31	28	1.0
Object other race home for dinner	9	26	16.5*	15	24	13.1*
Segregate Black and White Schools	4	10	3.9	5	12	9.2+
Blacks shouldn't push themselves	49	69	29.9*	46	66	59.7*
Against racial bussing	80	78	0.3	76	76	0.0
Rights to have segregated neighborhood	14	29	10.2*	18	30	21.8*
Will not vote for Black president	6	17	10.6*	14	16	2.1
Object sending kids other race school	2	6	4.7	5	5	0.1
Homeowner can refuse to sell to Blacks	39	54	9.7*	55	50	4.3
Overall index (mean)	13.31	14.40		13.91	14.32	

* p<.001
+ p<.01
Note: Main effect of the Teacher/other and Sex factors were significant [F(1,24660)=40.20, p<.001, and F=4.88, p<.03, respectively]. The interaction between the two was also significant (F=8.39, p<.001).

Table 7 Percentage of teachers (T) and non-teachers (O) who agreed with specific political positions

Issue:	Male			Female		
Percent respondents:	T	O	X^2	T	O	X^2
Favor Capital punishment	78	78	0.0	63	69	7.0+
Oppose law requiring gun permits	25	34	6.4+	18	20	0.9
Gov spends enough/much on environment	28	41	10.2*	37	41	2.1
Gov spends too little/enough on defense	52	66	13.4*	65	69	3.7
Overall index (mean)	6.07	6.53		6.04	6.17	

* p<.001
+ p<.01
Note: Main effect of the Teacher/other and Sex factors were significant [F(1,24695)=20.62, 4.88, respectively, p<.002 for both]. The interaction between the two was also significant (F=6.44, p<.01).

Table 8. Mean of different indices (presented in Tables 1-7) for teachers (T) and others (O) within each of the sex and educational background groups.

	Bachlors Degree				Masters Degree			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Beliefs	T	O	T	O	T	O	T	O
1 Religious	6.11	5.76	6.25	6.97	5.83	5.73	6.19	5.86
2 Women	9.57	9.76	9.64	9.22	9.46	9.72	9.27	8.99
3 Sexual	6.03	5.83	6.31	5.82	5.92	5.75	6.04	5.68
4 Abortion	9.41	8.77	9.35	8.66	8.91	8.39	8.67	8.25
5 Civil	18.18	17.84	19.69	18.03	18.10	17.18	18.36	17.32
6 Racial	13.40	13.47	13.79	13.26	13.06	12.95	13.26	12.77
7 Political	6.18	6.28	6.00	5.81	5.88	6.08	5.91	5.54

Note: Different belief indices are based on different scale magnitudes and are not comparable to each other. Smaller numbers indicate greater liberal attitudes.